

Seventh Heaven

One of the world's great department stores, Kaufhaus des Westens in Berlin, is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. Better known by its abbreviation, KaDeWe, this Berlin institution offers all kinds of luxury goods from all over the world. But it is especially famous for its gourmet and delicatessen department on the top floor—the biggest in Europe. There's nothing you can't buy here; if they don't have it in stock, they'll get it for you.

By
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Photos by
Matthias Martin



When food lovers die and go to heaven, this—or some place very much like it—must be where they end up. It's all here: the delicious smell of succulent roast chicken; the heavenly scent of freshly baked bread; a staggering array of the finest pastries and cakes; fantastic chocolate creations; a lavish rainbow spread of seafood; every conceivable kind of fruit and cheese; mouth-watering hams, sausages, and cold cuts; wine, champagne, whiskies, brandies, and, and, and... a mind-boggling 34,000 different delicacies in all, artfully displayed and spread out over 7,000 square meters (about 75,000 sq. ft.). The gourmet section of Berlin's venerable KaDeWe department store is Europe's biggest and takes up the entire top floor. To the German way of counting, that's the sixth floor, but in the United States it would be the seventh. And what could be more fitting than finding seventh heaven on the seventh floor?

Only the price tags might tell you that you're not in paradise. And while undoubtedly many of those shopping here are regular folks splurging on a favorite treat, there are clearly plenty for

whom money is no object. Matthias Lehmann, the expert for liquor and spirits among the staff of 500, shares an anecdote about a customer from Ukraine. A cognac enthusiast requested something truly exclusive, so Lehmann led him over to the "crown jewel" in his collection: a Hennessy Ellipse, 43.5 percent vol., in a 0.7-liter Baccarat crystal carafe. Retail price: 5,999 euros—not exactly pocket change. As they walked over, Lehmann raved about the brandy's delicate aroma with a hint of candied fruit and wild roses. He needn't have bothered; without a moment's hesitation, the man plunked down 6,000 euros—in cash.

With 150 chefs, 34 food stands, and room to seat 1,000 diners, KaDeWe's delicatessen section is not only one of the largest—if not the largest—gourmet temples in Berlin, it is a food lover's paradise. Walking through the maze of colorful displays and food stands is truly an experience for all the senses, but especially for taste. Even those who have worked here for many years are not immune to a sense of wonder. The manager, Norbert Könnecke, makes his rounds here several times a day to check that ▶





Keeper of the realm:
 Manager Norbert Könnecke (above) watches over the seventh floor

nothing is amiss. When we talk to him, he waxes lyrical about “the aroma of freshly ground coffee, the magical allure of the exotic varieties of fish and seafood, the incredible array of colors at the fruit and vegetable stands.” As his realm passes before his mind’s eye, his descriptions of the delicacies are so vivid you get the impression he can almost taste the different flavors on his tongue.

According to Könnecke, “People don’t come here just to buy their groceries. They come to look around, to try new things, to treat themselves, and to enjoy their free time.” There’s truly something here for everyone: whether you’re in the mood for delicate petit fours or French oysters with a glass of champagne, you can indulge your craving here, on the spot. Those with more jaded palates or adventurous natures can try exotic delicacies such as smoked Kudu ham (Kudu is a species of antelope native to South Africa). “We have pretty much everything,” Könnecke says with an unmistakable touch of pride in his voice, “and if we don’t have it, we can get it for you.” As a matter of fact, star chefs from the best restaurants on the continent call regularly when they need some special, hard-to-find ingredient. Most of the fresh produce here—everything from chanterelle mushrooms from Morocco to beans from Senegal—is delivered daily by a twenty-ton truck straight from the huge Rungis wholesale market in Paris. And when it comes to the really exotic stuff that can’t be bought ▶



Cheese spread:
 KaDeWe’s gourmet department carries over 1,300 kinds of cheese

Tickle your taste buds:
 At KaDeWe you’ll find both familiar favorites and exotic specialties



Famous Department Stores

Kaufhaus des Westens (KaDeWe)
 Berlin, Germany

Opened: 1907
 Sales area: 60,000 square meters (645,000 sq. ft.)

Claim to fame: Features seven floors with 380,000 different items on sale and Europe’s biggest gourmet department

Hours: Mon. through Thurs. 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Fri. 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., Sat. 9:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Subway station: Wittenbergplatz
Address: KaDeWe – Kaufhaus des Westens
 Tauentzienstr. 21–24, 10789 Berlin

Website:
www.kadewe-berlin.de



Famous Department Stores

GUM (Glavnyj Uniwersalny Magasin) Moscow, Russia

Opened: 1893
Sales area: 30,000 square meters (323,000 sq. ft.)

Claim to fame: The interior is a glass-covered shopping arcade (a forerunner of today's malls), crisscrossed with bridges linking different areas
Hours: Daily 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Subway stations: Teatralnaja, Ochotny Rjad, Ploschtschadj Rewoljuzii
Address: Red Square, Building 3, 109012 Moscow

Website:
www.gum.ru (in Russian)



Harrods London, England

Opened: 1849
Sales area: 92,000 square meters (990,000 sq. ft.)

Claim to fame: Its façade is illuminated by no fewer than 100,000 lightbulbs every evening

Hours: Mon. through Sat. 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Sun. 12 noon to 6 p.m.

Subway station: Knightsbridge
Address: 87–135 Brompton Road, Knightsbridge, London, SW1X 7XL

Website:
www.harrods.com



there, the store's buyers can draw on an extensive network of scouts and suppliers spanning the entire globe.

Pitahaya fruit from Thailand? No problem. Bison entrecote from Canada? On special today. Mahi-mahi from the Indian Ocean? On ice at the fish counter. As the man in charge there, Hans-Joachim Weitzel says, "A lot of our customers wait eagerly for specialties like mahi-mahi or Alfonsino and call us to ask if their favorite fish has arrived yet." With 32 years' experience, Weitzel can give expert advice on everything relating to seafood or fish. "Mahi-mahi is lean and has a very pleasant, slightly sweet taste. You can prepare it many ways—it's good sautéed, poached, or grilled." If that's not enough to convince you, you can have the chefs at the "Fischkutter" stand near the oyster and sushi bar prepare a piece for you on the spot. Tasting is better than believing.

Taste tests of this sort are par for the course for Klaus Laetsch. The KaDeWe veteran of 25 years is in charge of over 1,300 varieties of cheese. "Some cus-

Tough on the outside, tender on the inside:
How about some oysters from the northeast Atlantic?



Famous Department Stores

Bloomingdale's New York City, USA

Opened: 1872
Sales area: 86,800 square meters (934,000 sq. ft.)

Claim to fame: Its signature "brown bags" (they come in small, medium, and large) have become an icon recognized by millions all over the world

Hours: Mon. through Fri. 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Sun. 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Subway stations: Lexington Avenue, 59th Street
Address: 59th Street & Lexington Avenue/1000 Third Avenue, New York NY 10022

Website: www.bloomingdales.com



tomers can only provide the vaguest description of what they want. We offer them different kinds to try until they've found exactly what they had in mind," he says. Laetsch is used to this sort of challenge. It happens especially often when people come back from their summer vacations, trying to capture elusive impressions of unfamiliar tastes and exotic aromas they remember from their trips. For example, during a stay in Switzerland, one customer discovered the delights of a local cheese made with wildflowers and Alpine herbs, and KaDeWe stocked up on the specialty at his request.

With 3,400 different varieties, the shelves of the wine section offer plenty to choose from. However, wine lovers shouldn't miss the opportunity to have Marcus Porzucek, the head wine buyer, show them his treasure trove. Among the gems stored in the locked glass room, which is kept at a constant temperature of 12 to 13 degrees Celsius (53–55 degrees Fahrenheit), you'll find all vintages of Mouton Rothschild from 1955 on. Porzucek recounts a story about one American customer for whom, when he spotted a 1982 Solais through the glass, it was love at first sight. The man explained that it was the wine that had been served at his

Expert-in-residence:
Hans-Joachim Weitzel knows all about everything the sea has to offer



Macy's New York City, USA

Opened: 1858
Sales area: 198,500 square meters (2,137,000 sq. ft.)

Claim to fame: The biggest department store in the world, including services such as a visitors' center with multilingual staff, a post office, and personal shoppers; the Thanksgiving Day Parade, first sponsored by Macy's in 1927, has become an American institution drawing crowds of 250,000 every year, with millions more watching the live television broadcast

Hours: Mon., Thurs., and Fri. 9:45 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., Tues. and Wed. 9:45 a.m. to 6:45 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m. to 6:45 p.m., Sun. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Subway stations: 34th Street/Pennsylvania Station, 34th Street/Herald Square

Address:
151 West 34th Street, New York, NY 10001

Website: www.macys.com



Gourmet temple:
The 150 chefs working at the food section's 34 stands offer something for even the most jaded palate

wedding, and that he had hunted for it ever since—in vain. He promptly bought the entire supply—seventeen bottles at 298 euros each—and had it delivered to his hotel room.

But the KaDeWe is much more than just the sum of all its departments—it's a brand in its own right, a beloved institution. As manager Könnecke puts it, "We're a Berlin landmark, a must-see sight." Indeed, at times there seem to be more tourists than locals strolling through the aisles. If we take that into consideration, the following fact is less surprising than it might at first seem: according to Könnecke, the gourmet section's best-selling item (10,000 a year) is mustard that comes in a bear-shaped jar. Featured in the city's coat of arms, the bear has become a symbol of Berlin, and bears in all shapes, sizes, and forms are popular souvenirs. However, while the mustard bear may top the list when it comes to numbers sold—though we're not really sure if Könnecke wasn't joking—at just under seven euros, it's not pricey enough to rate among the most profitable items. Champagne is a more likely candidate: the venerable store sells 70,000 bottles a year, at prices of 19.98 euros and up. ▶

Famous Department Stores

Galleries Lafayette

Paris, France

Opened: 1893

Sales area: 18,000 square meters (194,000 sq. ft.)

Claim to fame: Art Nouveau architecture; its central hall features an impressive glass dome

Hours: Mon. through Sat. 9:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., Thurs. until 9 p.m.

Subway station: Chaussée d'Antin – La Fayette

Address: 40 boulevard Haussmann, 75009 Paris

Website:

www.gallerieslafayette.com



Breuninger

Stuttgart, Germany

Opened: 1881

Sales area: 35,000 square meters (377,000 sq. ft.)

Claim to fame: In honor of this Stuttgart institution's 125th anniversary, Porsche designed a special 911 Carrera 4S cabriolet in the store's signature red and added numerous special details

Hours: Mon. through Wed., Fri. 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Thurs. 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., Sat. 9:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Subway station: Rathaus

Address: E. Breuninger GmbH & Co. Marktstrasse 1–3, 70173 Stuttgart

Website:

www.breuninger.com





Not for the budget-conscious:
Marcus Porzucek shows off a 5,999-euro bottle of cognac

A bottle of KaDeWe's most expensive champagne, a 1907 Heidsieck Monopol, would run you 4,500 euros. According to Könnecke, there are only "two or three bottles" left in stock, and, actually, no one here really wants to part with them. After all, 1907 is the year KaDeWe opened its doors. What is more, the incredible story behind this particular champagne can only add to the store's legend. It seems Russian czar Nicolas II had ordered several crates of the Heidsieck to be delivered to his palace in St. Petersburg. It never arrived: the Swedish ship carrying it was sunk by a torpedo on November 3, 1916. When the ship's freight was salvaged more than ninety years later, it turned out that the champagne bottles had miraculously survived intact. Moreover, the darkness, the temperature, and the steady movement of the waves had conserved the champagne itself. Not only is it drinkable, but, to quote Könnecke, "It's sensational." And after all, when a legend like KaDeWe celebrates its 100th anniversary, nothing less than that would do. ◀

Famous Department Stores

Takashimaya

Tokyo, Japan

Opened: 1996

Sales area: 54,000 square meters (581,000 sq. ft.)

Times Square mall: 84,000 square meters total
 (904,000 sq. ft.)

Claim to fame: The twelfth floor features changing exhibitions, for example on Japanese arts and crafts

Hours: Sun. through Fri. 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.,
 Sat. 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Subway station: Shinjuku

Address: 5-24-2 Sendagaya
 Shibuya-ku, Tokyo

Website: www.takashimaya.co.jp (in Japanese)



Foto: Frédéric Gaulton

Myers

Melbourne, Australia

Opened: 1911

Sales area: Currently undergoing extensive refurbishment

Claim to fame: Housed in two separate buildings connected by various footbridges on different floors

Hours: Mon. through Wed. 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thurs.
 9 a.m. to 7 p.m, Fri. 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Sun. 10 a.m.
 to 6 p.m.

Subway station: Dandenong Station

Address: 295 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000

Website: www.myer.com.au

